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ABSTRACT

Views on current problems and future challenges in higher education are provided by a former U.S. Department of Education official who also was president of Chicago State University. Among these views are that: educators should have the integrity to exclude from the university any student who shows no possibility of academic success, even with the support of remedial programs; teachers' colleges and schools of education do not usually attract the best students; teacher education should be a professional program at the graduate level and all four-year colleges and schools of education should be abolished; and colleges should screen faculty members and administrators for eligibility and competence and should promote professional development. Issues concerning equal opportunity for minorities and the case of Chicago State University, which is predominantly black, are also addressed. At that institution, the grading system was reviewed and made less permissive, and qualifying exams in English, mathematics, and reading were established as conditions for graduation. The university also made adjustments in administrative structures, including converting academic divisions into colleges and streamlining the administration. (SW)

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HIGHER EDUCATION: SOME CURRENT PROBLEMS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

BY

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AT

THE TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

ATHENS, GEORGIA

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1985

9:00 A.M.

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I am Georgia born, Georgia bred and Georgia fled. Thomas Wolfe was so wrong when he said, "You can't go home again." The prodigal son has come home - to put the oats down to where the goats can get them.

I am highly honored by the invitation to speak at this preeminent university, on the occasion of its 200th anniversary. Moreover, I count it a special privilege to be on the campus of The University of Georgia whose President, Dr. Fred C. Davison, has done perhaps more than any other university President in America, or certainly as much as any other, in the movement toward academic excellence in higher education.

When this nation was formed, it recognized as its first responsibility that it must have a commitment to education: it knew that no nation could succeed without education and therefore made a pledge to democracy with full participation of its citizenry in a sound educational system. John Adams said it so well, "I must carry a gun that my son may carry a plow that his son may carry a book."

America has used this commitment to knowledge to develop one of the finest and most advanced higher educational systems, private and public, that has ever existed in any society. Yet it is failing because we, in higher education, have been too equivocal. We know what should be done but we have not had the courage and integrity to do it.

I cannot ask you to have conviction and probity and not have them myself. Recall that I was introduced as Former Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of Education, Designee: I resigned just forty-eight days ago.

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I was a Democrat in a Republican Administration. Believe me when I say that I was treated more than fairly by the Reagan Administration -- and I enjoyed the work ~~very much~~. My letter of resignation, moreover, was a great surprise to both my superiors and colleagues.

Previously, I had been a University President for nine years and, in that position, I could speak openly and freely on any issue. In the job as Deputy Assistant Secretary, I no longer had this freedom. <u>This would be true whether one worked in a Republican or Democratic Administration</u>.

I, like most of you, want security and wish to be respected and admired. While security and an excellent job have their places, in this stage of my life, I am not now concerned about them. My goal is to have the courage to stand up, and to speak with integrity and not with equivocation.

America owes no person the right to remain in a university. It should encourage only those students who really want to earn a degree in higher education. Educators should have the integrity to exclude from the university environment any student, regardless of ethnic origin, who shows no possibility of academic success whatsoever. Of course, any student given remedial help and showing a strong desire and capacity to achieve is worth gambling on. However, if vigorous programs of remediation, designed to provide the tools and skills the student had not gained in earlier schooling, do not permit the student to perform college work, he/she should be dismissed from the institution. Such students should not be kept in the university solely because they are a good source for revenues. Of course non-demeaning alternative preparatory programs, for the expelled students, should be provided by society.

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For students to succeed, they must be taught and they must learn. It was true yesterday and it will be true tomorrow -- that university students who do not have an understanding of the sciences, mathematics, the humanities, and particularly the English language, and who fail to respond positively to remediation, are the ones who will be dismissed.

Who teaches these students? The answer is teachers and instructors, and, where do most of them matriculate? The response, of course, is in Teachers' Colleges and Schools of Education. The logical question to follow is, how good are these Institutions?

Since we are emphasizing integrity here, we must reply that they are generally not too good,

- Teachers' Colleges and Schools of Education do not usually attract the best and brightest students
- The Institutions are not high-prestige colleges or schools in our universities
- Their courses for recertification are usually not in the subject areas, but in educational specialties: examples are, "Physics without Mathematics", "Why Teachers Burn Out", "The Theory of Dancing", etc.
- They teach the appreciation of subject matter rather than the knowledge of subject matter
- Doctors of Education are usually not required to write a thesis whereas the Ph.D.s must do so

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I for one, have not been quiet about how the minds of many of our students have been turned into mush because too many teachers and instructors, at and from such Institutions, are illiterate in chemistry, physics and mathematics. In these Teachers' Colleges and Schools of Education, there are too many $20,000.00 science and math teachers with 15¢ scientific and mathematics literacy. They do not teach; they only increase the hot air in the classroom.

It is better to have an unqualified unemployed teacher than 25 students, because they were untaught, relegated to a lifetime of no success.

We must have the best for our students and this is why, over the years, I have advocated that Teacher Education should be a professional program at the graduate level only; this would entail abolishing all Four-year Teacher Colleges and Schools of Education, as well as eliminating all existing undergraduate Teacher Education Programs. All future teachers, then, would be required first to earn a bachelor's degree in a liberal arts college followed by an earned degree in Teacher Education at the graduate level. That is, in a TEACHER school which would be the equivalent of a LAW or medical school.

Were this done, it would be easier to justify a substantial pay increase for teachers. For the people who control the money and have the power, know that illiterate teachers are like booby-traps which should not be employed in their Institutions.

It is going to take educated people to handle the affairs of this nation if we are to thrive in the years to come. In order to develop as a nation of intelligent, capable, informed people, we need to change and dramatically improve our system of Higher American Education -- because from it come all of our teachers.

Last year we spent around $230 billion on education in this country; and, moreover, thirty percent of the nation's population is involved in education,

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from kindergarten through graduate school -- public and private. With all its huge magnificence, our system of education is simply not performing as it should. Today we have approximately 23 million adult illiterates in the United States. SAT scores have generally declined for 19 years. Only 72 percent of our ninth graders nationwide graduate from high school. That means we have a dropout rate of 28 percent. Out of these dropouts and illiterates will probably come many of tomorrow's welfare clients, many of the inmates in our penal institutions, and thousands of disillusioned Americans.

If we intend to keep our Republic great and the promises that are contained in our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, our Bill of Rights and our Civil Rights Laws -- and, if we are going to retain leadership in the educational world, then we must become more effective in the future than we have been in the past in educating the college graduates of tomorrow; and, I mean all college graduates -- no matter what their ethnic background happens to be.

Let me now turn my attention to factors that affect Human Beings. In America we should be one people with none King or subject. Dr. King, in Oslo, must have had Higher Education in mind when he said in 1964 that "the richer we have become materially, the poorer we have become mentally and spiritually. We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish -- but we have not learned the simple art of living together as Brothers". Pigmentation or color is one of the main reasons that we have not acted like brothers in the past in Higher Education. In truth we have acted more like Cains and Abels.

No matter what you may want to believe, there are no black or white people; we are all colored people -- or people of color. Our physical

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differences are the results of environmental needs, that over millions of years caused mutations or other changes.

Knowledgeable people know their color. Look at my handkerchief; it is white. No one here is that color. People who think they are white should get down on their knees and pray to God that they are not -- that they have some melanin or pigment and are really people of color. Were they really white and void of melanin, the ultraviolet rays from the sun would burn them up.

Nor am I or any other so-called black person in this audience black. Were we truly black, we would be perfect receptors of the ultraviolet rays from the sun and our body temperatures would rise quickly to over 100 degrees, into a fever so severe we, too, would burn up. We are a flower garden of people of beautiful colors, ranging from a pale light cream to a rich dark ebony -- all with melanin and all with color -- and all are Americans.

Moreover, no person in this audience, born in America, chose this country as his birthplace. No one here chose his color or his cultural and economic environment at birth; certainly no one chose the quality of his mind -- and no person was able to choose his father or mother. None of us had any control over our beginnings.

The pigmentation issue is the Devil at work in our colleges and universities. Are the universities as they approach the 21st century willing to drive him out? This issue has made you treat some students educationally different, which is the worst kind of discrimination. Universities show shortsightedness when they suspend their entrance requirements and lower their academic standards so that unqualified majority and minority students can be enrolled; then, when they leave

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the Institutions, particularly the minorities, and speak and write poor English -- the universities blame them and they get away with it. The fault or blame is really the Institutions which have tampered with the soul of education by eroding the 'sense of fairness principle'.

You really do a disservice, particularly to minorities, when you feel sorry for them and enroll unqualified ones. This act on your part, because minorities are discriminated against and some have been subjected to decades of inferior education, is unwarranted from a professional and ethical standpoint and should cease.

All you do when you give special treatment to any students is to convince them that they are worthless, and then you do not have to tell them to go to the back door, they will go there on their own.

Most minorities that I know ask only for an equal opportunity to be educated -- no more and no less. Let me illustrate. In 1974, when I went to Chicago State University -- a school that was 77 percent Afro-American -- as its President, the academic programs were suffering from permissive grading practices, lack of attention to basic skills being mastered by its graduates, an NCATE probation status, and an administration still under the shadow of suspicion from recent indictments and convictions of dishonest staff. We could have let our efforts to take immediate action slide. We did not. We demanded that our faculty and administration use all their imagination and skill to bring about immediate changes. The grading system was reviewed. The 'bite' of an F grade was reinstituted, students were dismissed or put on probation to assure that only capable and hardworking students would be certified as our

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graduates. To that same end, we expanded our English, mathematics and reading qualifying exams to all of our students as conditions for their graduation. Within two to three years we were able to proudly graduate students who could perform effectively as teachers, businessmen and women, and as well educated men and women -- and our enrollment did not decline.

It then followed that from these and other moves made to upgrade our programs, we were not only successful in attaining NCATE accreditation but received the maximum number of years for such accreditation: ten years.

In state and national competitive examinations, our students began to distinguish themselves. We were especially proud when one minority student placed highest in the nation in the written GMAT program. This competition included name Ivy League institutions, big ten universities and other outstanding educational institutions.

Just recently in the Chicago Tribune, Voice of the People Section, November 24, 1984, there appeared this statement by Marianne Spengler, "I received my B.A. in 1981 and my M.A. in 1982 from Chicago State University .... I am neither underprepared nor unskilled. In fact, I am among the 1 percent of a population who scores in the highest range in a standardized test (The MAT)."

We moved quickly to make adjustments in administrative structures to be able to operate on the same level as other universities. We converted our academic divisions into colleges giving more prestigious titles of dean of colleges to those academic administrators. This adjustment was most effective in attracting outstanding educators to direct our academic efforts. We did have critics of such moves nine years ago, but we showed strength and our

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critics generally became silent. We moved quickly on these matters because 'delay is the deadliest form of non-progress'.

We also streamlined the administration. Our faculty had said continuously that we had too many administrators, and the President should "cut out the fat" even though a personnel survey indicated that our staff was of the usual and reasonable size. However, we looked carefully and asked ourselves if we could reduce the number of administrators, without losing the quality of support services; we found we could -- and shocked the faculty by reducing the number of administrators dramatically. We reduced the number of vice presidents from five to two. There was a significant reduction of support staff over a three-year period. During the last year, we realized a savings of over a quarter of a million dollars in personnel dollars. It was a great challenge and we met it successfully.

By the way, no matter who you hear was responsible for the movement toward academic excellence in Higher Education and away from permissiveness and social promotions, it was the 1974 faculty and administration of Chicago State University (CSU).

The U. S. Department of Education, as late as 1981, thumbed a ride in the CSU automobile that was moving toward academic excellence -- then stole the car at the December, 1983, conference "The National Forum on Excellence in Education", Indianapolis, Indiana.

You have heard about Chicago State University. What about your universities? The challenge to you is, are you getting the job done? That is each unit, each department, each office within the university. The bottom

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line, as you well know, is how does the university get the coordination and cooperation needed so that its students and its community will be provided with the instruction and support services needed in order to benefit significantly from the university's academic progress. In order for the student and the community to receive the best of what the university is mandated to offer, each university representative must fulfill his/her special role of service and responsibility.

Above all, its faculty must be effective. The university must do everything in its power to assist and encourage the faculty to be effective. Specifically, close attention must be given to future faculty members before they are hired. The university must screen not only for eligibility but also for competence. And it must put special emphasis on competence in the classroom, the lecture hall and the laboratory. Before it gives a person the privilege of working with its students, the university must ask some very pointed questions: Have you taught before? How do you teach? How have you measured your competence in teaching? How do you prepare your course presentations? How do you view your use of formal class meeting time?

Once hired, faculty members should remain at the university only on their abilities and qualifications -- and approval by the Academic Department's Evaluation Systems, which must be fair and most importantly, used.

As with the faculty, the Institution should spend as much time hiring as firing with respect to administrative personnel. It should seek the best administrators. Most good administrators must be developed. And do Institutions take the trouble to do this? I am sure that most universities do not. Too often they assume that the new manager or administrator is bright enough to pick up

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the institutional nuances on his/her own. Rightly or wrongly they assume that the new administrator is able to manage staff, write intelligent memorandums, set up work schedules, demand quality work, perform budgetary tasks, plan ahead and anticipate institutional problems or needs. They assume that the new administrator they have hired is an effective manager.

But universities cannot simply assume. They must establish as a priority within their universities mandatory training and monitoring of new administrators.

With appropriate planning, monitoring and training, the university can avoid the waste of months and even years of what should be the developmental stage of a fellow human's life, as well as the irritation and embarrassment caused by incompetence.

Incompetence in one area, communications, is clearly a problem that needs attention at every university. Personnel at all levels must be able to communicate. Remember, 'even if you explain things so clearly that no one can misunderstand, someone will.'

We must communicate, and we must do it in a timely, concise, and clear manner. It is so irritating to get an invitation to some campus function two days before the event. It is frustrating also for one office to request emergency or rush service from another office when the need for service was known weeks or months in advance of the request.

Likewise, Institutions are incompetent or inefficient when they overwork one office and let another office "live in semi-retirement". They are inefficient when universities allow one academic department to carry an

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inordinately larger load than several other departments. They may get the job done. But they are wasting people, and their time.

And these inefficiencies don't just happen. Institutions let them happen and they watch them happen. They give office A the job office B should be doing because they know A is more likely to get the job done than office B. In such a case, universities are effective in delivering service, but ineffective and inefficient as administrators or managers.

In conclusion, I see the challenges for the universities in the 1990's to be centered on doing more with less. Resources will decline, universities will change; some will become smaller; some will disappear. Those that survive will have fewer resources with which to cope, but will be successful only if they manage well and clearly understand that earning an education is hard work -- not fun; that education is a serious undertaking demanding a serious response from both student, faculty, and the university's administration. For just as the institution demands that its students and faculty accept responsibility for extending themselves academically, so must the university administration accept the challenge of integrity, good planning and efficient management for success in the decades to come.

King Solomon tells us that there is a time for every purpose under the sun; there is a time to laugh and there is a time to weep. If you do your job with integrity and not with equivocation, no one will weep for Higher Education in the future. Thank you and God Bless you.

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